Thespy Advisory Committee Charter

EDUCATIONAL THEATRE ASSOCIATION

Adopted Fall 2026

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1. Purpose

The **Thespy Advisory Committee** serves as an advisory body to the Educational Theatre Association (EdTA), bringing together diverse perspectives and expertise to provide thoughtful recommendations that play a central role in the ongoing development and continuous improvement of the Thespy program. EdTA generally relies on these recommendations in its decision-making while retaining final authority for program decisions.

The committee honors the strengths and traditions of Thespys while thoughtfully identifying opportunities to advance equity, educational value, clarity, accessibility, and consistency for participants.

2. Committee Composition

The Thespy Advisory Committee will consist of **up to 15 members,** plus at last one EdTA staff and at least one EdTA board member. Committee members will be appointed by a Selection Committee through an application and selection process designed to reflect the breadth and diversity of the Thespy community.

In making appointments, the selection committee will strive to assemble a committee that includes a balance of perspectives and experiences, including:

- Geographic representation from across the membership network.
- Schools, troupes, and chapters of varying sizes and community types.
- Educators with expertise across both performance and technical theatre disciplines.
- Individuals with experience in adjudication, chapter leadership, festival operations, and troupe direction.
- A range of experience levels, backgrounds, perspectives, and philosophies that support thoughtful discussion and informed decision-making.

Committee appointments will seek to balance institutional knowledge with fresh perspectives, ensuring the committee benefits from both long-standing experience and innovative ideas that reflect the evolving needs of students, educators, and the theatre education community.

While committee members bring valuable expertise from their own schools, chapters, and professional experiences, they are expected to contribute with the broader interests of the national Thespy community in mind. Members should approach discussions with curiosity, respect for differing viewpoints, a willingness to challenge assumptions constructively, and a commitment to evaluating ideas based on their educational value and impact on the Thespy program.

EdTA may consider applicants' demonstrated commitment to collaboration, openness to new ideas, thoughtful problem-solving, and ability to engage in respectful dialogue when making committee appointments.

No single perspective, discipline, geographic region, or constituency should dominate the committee's composition. The committee's strength lies in bringing together individuals with diverse experiences and viewpoints to help ensure recommendations are well-informed, balanced, equitable, and forward-looking.

Subject Matter Experts

To strengthen the committee's work, EdTA may invite Subject Matter Experts to participate in meetings or working groups when specialized knowledge would inform the committee's deliberations.

Subject Matter Experts may include professionals from higher education, the theatre industry, accessibility and inclusion, arts administration, licensing organizations, or other relevant fields. They participate as advisors on specific topics and contribute expertise, research, perspective, and feedback, but are not members of the committee and do not participate in committee votes.

3. Operating Principles

The Thespy Advisory Committee is committed to supporting the ongoing growth and success of the Thespy program. These Operating Principles guide the committee's discussions, recommendations, and interactions with one another. Members are expected to uphold these principles in carrying out the committee's work.

- **Prioritize Students:** Prioritize decisions that enhance student learning, artistic growth, and meaningful educational experiences.
- **Promote Educational Excellence:** Promote high standards while recognizing that the primary purpose of Thespys is education, growth, and artistic development.
- **Advance Equity & Accessibility:** Consider how policies, procedures, and practices impact participants from diverse backgrounds, communities, identities, abilities, and program types, striving to ensure equitable access, opportunity, and belonging for all.
- **Foster Consistency & Clarity:** Support policies, adjudication practices, and resources that promote fairness, transparency, consistency, and clear expectations across the Thespian network.
- **Embrace Continuous Improvement:** Honor the strengths and traditions of the Thespy program while remaining open to innovation, reflection, and thoughtful change

informed by evidence, stakeholder feedback, and the evolving needs of the theatre education community.

- **Practice Evidence-Informed Decision Making:** Develop recommendations informed by educational research, program data, stakeholder feedback, and professional expertise. Value evidence over assumption, remain open to new information, and recognize that effective decisions balance research, experience, and the diverse contexts in which the Thespy program operates.
- **Lead Collaboratively:** Engage in respectful dialogue, value diverse perspectives, seek to understand differing viewpoints, and contribute constructively to recommendations that strengthen the Thespy program.
- **Think Globally:** Approach discussions with the interests of the broader Thespy community in mind, recognizing that recommendations should serve participants across all chapters, schools, and program types rather than any single constituency.
- **Steward the Program:** Recognize the responsibility to preserve the integrity, credibility, and educational purpose of the Thespy program while thoughtfully guiding its evolution. Balance respect for the program's history with a commitment to innovation, ensuring that decisions strengthen the experience for current participants while positioning Thespys to meet the needs of future generations.

4. Membership and Appointments

Appointment Process

Members of the Thespy Advisory Committee are appointed through an application and selection process conducted by a Selection Committee. The Selection Committee is chaired by an EdTA Board member, composed of EdTA members, and includes 1-2 EdTA staff liaisons.

Appointments are made annually as needed to:

- Fill expiring terms.
- Maintain a balanced committee composition consistent with the Committee Composition section of this charter.
- Ensure continuity of the committee's work.
- Address identified gaps in expertise, experience, or representation.

When necessary, EdTA may recruit and appoint qualified individuals outside of the regular application cycle to fill vacancies or meet operational needs. Individuals appointed to fill a vacancy will generally serve the remainder of the unexpired term unless otherwise determined by EdTA.

Terms of Service

Committee members generally serve **two-year terms**.

Members may be reappointed for **one additional consecutive term**, for a maximum of **two consecutive terms (four years of service)**. After completing two consecutive terms, individuals must take at least one year away from the committee before being eligible for reappointment.

There is no limit on the total number of terms an individual may serve over time, provided the required break in consecutive service has been observed.

Transitional Appointments

To establish the committee under its revised charter and create staggered membership terms, EdTA will make **transitional appointments** during the committee's inaugural year.

Transitional appointments may vary in length and are intended to:

- Establish staggered committee rotations.
- Balance institutional knowledge with new perspectives.
- Support continuity while the committee is reconstituted under its revised charter.
- Provide flexibility to evaluate committee composition and effectiveness during its initial implementation.

Transitional appointments may be made to both returning and newly appointed members as appropriate to achieve these goals.

Following the transitional appointment period, all appointments and reappointments will generally be for standard two-year terms.

Service during a transitional appointment **will not count** toward the committee's limit of two consecutive terms.

Returning Members

EdTA recognizes the valuable contributions of individuals who served on previous iterations of the Thespy Advisory Committee. Returning members bring important institutional knowledge and historical perspective while partnering with newly appointed members to help shape the committee's future under its revised charter.

Returning members are encouraged to share their experience while embracing the committee's commitment to continuous improvement, evidence-informed decision making, and thoughtful consideration of new ideas.

Committee Continuity

The committee is intentionally structured to balance **continuity with renewal**. Through staggered appointments and term limits, the committee will retain institutional knowledge while regularly welcoming new voices and perspectives.

This approach helps ensure the committee remains responsive to the evolving needs of students, educators, chapters, and the broader theatre education community while preserving the strengths and educational purpose of the Thespy program.

5. Participation Expectations

Members of the Thespy Advisory Committee serve in an advisory capacity, providing thoughtful feedback and recommendations to support the ongoing growth and success of the Thespy program. The committee does not have elected officers or a committee chair. Meetings are facilitated by EdTA staff, who provide administrative support, maintain meeting records, and coordinate the committee's work.

Committee members are expected to:

- **Prepare & Participate**
  - Attend and actively participate in regularly scheduled committee meetings.
  - Review meeting materials in advance and come prepared to contribute.
  - Be fully engaged during meetings and actively participate in committee discussions.
- **Contribute Beyond Meetings**
  - Complete requested reviews, surveys, and committee work between meetings as needed.
  - Participate in subgroups, pilot initiatives, or other projects that support the committee's work, when requested.
  - Meet agreed-upon deadlines and respond to committee communications in a timely manner.
- **Stay Informed**
  - Maintain familiarity with current Thespy policies, rules, rubrics, and resources relevant to the committee's work.
  - Stay informed about committee initiatives and ongoing program developments.
- **Communicate Responsibly**
  - Notify the EdTA staff liaison if unable to attend a meeting or meet an expected deadline.
  - Inform the staff liaison of any significant changes that may affect committee participation.

    - Recognize that committee discussions and recommendations are intended to be documented through public meeting minutes and represent the collective work of the committee.
    - Disclose any actual or potential conflicts of interest.
- **Professionalism & Ethics**
    - Conduct themselves professionally and ethically.
    - Maintain the confidentiality of discussions or materials that EdTA explicitly identifies as confidential, including matters involving individual privacy, legal considerations, or other sensitive information.
    - Support the committee's work in accordance with the **Operating Principles** outlined in this charter.

Attendance

Committee members are expected to attend a minimum of **80% of scheduled meetings** and actively participate in the committee's work throughout their term.

Members who are unable to attend a meeting should notify the EdTA staff liaison in advance whenever possible.

Members who miss **three consecutive meetings**, demonstrate a pattern of non-participation, or are unable to fulfill the responsibilities outlined in this charter may be removed from the committee at EdTA's discretion.

EdTA Membership

Committee members are expected to maintain active EdTA membership throughout their term(s) of service.

6. Meetings & Decision-Making

Meetings

The Thespy Advisory Committee will meet **virtually at least once per month**. Meetings will generally be **60 minutes** in length. Additional meetings may be scheduled as needed to support significant initiatives or time-sensitive priorities.

EdTA staff will facilitate committee meetings, establish meeting agendas, provide supporting materials, and maintain meeting records. The committee does not have elected officers or a committee chair.

Time Commitment

Committee members should anticipate the following annual commitment:

- Participation in **monthly virtual meetings** lasting approximately **60 minutes**.
- Time to review meeting materials and prepare for discussions.
- Occasional work between meetings, such as reviewing proposed policies, handbook language, rubrics, resources, survey results, pilot initiatives, or other committee business.
- Periodic participation in working groups or subcommittees supporting projects such as policy development, rubric revisions, category development, adjudication resources, communications, or other committee priorities.
- Occasional collaboration with external subject matter experts or stakeholders identified by EdTA to inform the committee's work.

Most committee work outside of scheduled meetings is expected to average approximately **10–15 hours annually**, though the time commitment may vary depending on committee priorities and individual participation in working groups.

The committee's effectiveness depends on the active engagement of its members. Committee work is collaborative in nature, and members are expected to contribute their expertise not only during meetings but also through thoughtful review, timely feedback, and active participation between meetings.

Decision-Making

The Thespy Advisory Committee serves in an **advisory capacity**, providing thoughtful recommendations to inform the ongoing development of the Thespy program. While final authority for all policies, procedures, program changes, and implementation decisions remains with EdTA, the committee plays a **central role in shaping those decisions** through structured discussion and formal recommendations.

Committee recommendations will be developed through discussion followed by a formal vote of the committee. Recommendations are approved by a simple majority of committee members participating in the vote, unless otherwise specified by EdTA for a particular matter. Recommendations approved by the committee will generally serve as the basis for EdTA's decisions and implementation.

There may be occasions when EdTA determines that a different course of action is necessary due to organizational, legal, financial, operational, strategic, or risk-management considerations. In such cases, EdTA will communicate the rationale to the committee whenever appropriate.

Committee recommendations should be informed by the committee's **Operating Principles** and reflect thoughtful consideration of multiple perspectives, potential impacts, available evidence, and the long-term educational interests of the Thespy community. Diverse viewpoints are

valued throughout the deliberation process, and disagreement is recognized as an important part of developing well-informed recommendations.

Transparency & Confidentiality

The Thespy Advisory Committee is committed to conducting its work as openly as possible. Meeting minutes will document committee discussions, recommendations, and decisions and will be made publicly available to promote transparency and accountability.

From time to time, the committee may need to discuss matters involving individual participants, volunteers, personnel, legal issues, or other sensitive information. When appropriate, EdTA may designate a portion of a meeting as **confidential**. Confidential discussions will not be included in the public meeting minutes, and committee members are expected to maintain the confidentiality of those discussions.

Confidential sessions will be used only when necessary to protect individual privacy, comply with legal or organizational obligations, or address other sensitive matters requiring discretion.

Working Groups

To support the committee's work, EdTA may establish temporary **working groups** or **subcommittees** to explore specific topics or initiatives in greater depth. Working groups may include committee members and, when appropriate, outside subject matter experts.

Working groups will develop recommendations for consideration by the full committee but do not have independent decision-making authority.

7. Charter Review & Amendments

This charter is intended to provide a flexible framework for the work of the Thespy Advisory Committee. To ensure it continues to meet the evolving needs of the Thespy program and the Educational Theatre Association, the charter will be reviewed periodically by EdTA, with input from the Thespy Advisory Committee as appropriate.

EdTA reserves the right to amend this charter and modify committee composition, size, appointment processes, term structures, or operating procedures as needed to support the committee's effectiveness and to further its purpose and Operating Principles. Whenever practical, proposed substantive changes will be shared with the committee for feedback prior to implementation.

Nothing in this charter limits EdTA's authority to make final decisions regarding the Thespy program or the composition and operation of the Advisory Committee.